

May 2016

Office of the Chancellor

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Dear Parents,

You may be hearing about Zika virus in the news. This letter provides basic facts about Zika, including where you can find more information, alerts and warnings.

Learn about Zika virus.

- People usually get Zika through a mosquito bite—but not a bite from *any* mosquito.
- Zika is affecting parts of Central and South America, Mexico, the Caribbean and other places listed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The type of mosquito linked to the current outbreak, called *Aedes aegypti*, lives in these places. Find the latest Zika-affected locations at cdc.gov/zika.
- The most common symptoms are fever, rash, joint pain and conjunctivitis (red eyes). Most people have mild symptoms and do not need to go to a hospital.
- It is rare but possible for Zika to spread from one person to another through sexual contact and blood. Zika is *not* spread from person to person by casual contact.
- There is no Zika vaccine.

If you're pregnant, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) strongly recommends that you postpone travel to a Zika-affected area until health experts say it's safe.

Zika is not dangerous for most people. However, Zika can **cause birth defects**.

- *If it's not possible to delay travel*, talk to a health care provider first. The type of mosquito linked to the current outbreak is very aggressive. The mosquito bites during the day and early evening. Use insect repellents approved by the EPA, and follow the directions on the label. Apply sunscreen first, then repellent. Insect repellent is safe for pregnant women. Wear long sleeves and pants. Wear clothing treated with permethrin (a chemical that repels insects). Use a mosquito bed net if you cannot keep mosquitoes out of your residence.
- *If you are pregnant and did travel to an area affected by Zika*, contact your health care provider to **discuss Zika testing**.
- Find more warnings for pregnant women at nyc.gov/health/zika and cdc.gov/zika/pregnancy.

Help prevent mosquitoes in New York City.

Zika is *not* spreading in New York City, but local mosquitoes can spread other diseases, like West Nile virus. New Yorkers can help stop the spread of mosquito-borne viruses by following these steps:

- Apply insect repellents and wear long sleeves or pants in the evening during mosquito season (June through September).
- Install or repair screens on windows and doors.
- Empty standing water from containers such as flower pots, gutters, buckets, pool covers, pet water dishes, discarded tires and birdbaths. A very small body of water can be the breeding ground for hundreds of mosquito eggs.
- Make sure backyard pools are properly maintained and chlorinated.
- Report standing water to 311.

Visit nyc.gov/health/zika for the latest Zika information and alerts for New Yorkers.

Sincerely,



Carmen Fariña
Chancellor
Department of Education



Mary T. Bassett, MD, MPH
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